United Nations CEDAW/C/LAO/Q/8-9/Add.1

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

Distr.: General
21 June 2018

Original: English
English, French and Spanish only

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Seventy-first session
22 October–9 November 2018
Item 4 of the provisional agenda
Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

List of issues and questions in relation to the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of the Lao People's Democratic Republic

Addendum

Replies of the Lao People's Democratic Republic*

[Date received: 19 June 2018]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

18-10139 (E) 270718

Please recycle

Constitutional, legislative and policy framework

1. It is indicated in the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of the State party (CEDAW/C/LAO/8-9) that a number of developments took place within the reporting period to harmonize legislation and ensure that the provisions of international human rights treaties, in particular the Convention, are directly applicable and prevail over conflicting legislation (para. 17). In that regard, it is indicated in article 9 of the Law on Making Legislation of 2012 that, where inconsistencies exist between national legislation and relevant international human rights treaties, national legislation shall be amended in due time. Please clarify the meaning of "in due time" in this regard and indicate whether a specific time frame for amending national legislation regarding gender equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex has been envisaged. With regard to the amendments to articles 35 and 37 of the Constitution (para. 16) and the provisions outlined in article 4 of the Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children of 2014 in relation to discrimination, please indicate whether measures have been taken to implement those provisions, incorporate the principle of equality into all legislation and define and prohibit all forms of discrimination against women, including direct, indirect, formal and de facto discrimination by State and non-State actors, in accordance with the State party's obligations under articles 1 and 2 of the Convention and in line with target 5.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals. With regard to the Women's Caucus of the National Assembly (para. 9), please provide information on cases in which the Convention has been referred to when examining bills submitted by the Caucus and on the outcomes of those cases. Please also specify whether rural women, women from ethnic groups and migrant women are involved and whether their views are adequately represented.

Reply

2. Article 9 of the Law on Law Making (2012) indicates that when there is inconsistency between a national law and an international convention, the national law shall be revised in due time. The word "in due time" refers to a situation when the provisions of the existing or newly adopted national legislation is inconsistence with the provisions of treaties to which the Lao PDR is a party, the relevant authority shall study those provisions and make a proposal to the Government for consideration on whether the existing legislation should be amended or a new one should be adopted. After getting the approval of the Government for either way, the proposal shall be submitted to the Standing Committee of the National Assembly for consideration in accordance with the National Assembly's Annual Plan and Five-Year Plan on making and amendment of laws.

3. Measures taken in the prevention of violence against women in the Lao PDR are clearly provided in the Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children, Chapter VIII, consisting of 6 Articles in total such as Article 75 regarding measures against offenders; Article 76 — educational measures; Article 77 — disciplinary measures; Article 78 — civil measures; Article 79 — criminal measures; and Article 80 — measures against a person who refuses to help the victim.

4. In addition to the measures provided in this Law, the National Action Plan on the Protection and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children has been adopted. The National Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mother-Child at central and local levels focuses on the dissemination of laws and the National Action Plan, raising awareness on the mentioned issues. At the same time, there is an initiative to build of families, villages and districts with practice of gender equality and without violence against women is.

5. As mentioned in the above paragraph regarding the making of national laws in compliance with international treaties, in principle, the procedure for making legislation shall be based on the Law on Law Making which is stipulated in Article 36 that the respective law drafting committees shall submit the draft law including specific questions to the relevant sectors, local authorities, and other relevant parties for feedback. Furthermore, the committee in charge shall publish the draft law on the Website of the Government or Official Gazette for a period of at least 60 days, for the public to provide feedback on the draft law. When the draft law is submitted to the National Assembly, Article 52 of this law shall be applied. The Standing Committee of the National Assembly holds a workshop for the members of the National Assembly, including the National Assembly's women's caucus in order to provide opinions, comments and feedbacks on the draft law. Moreover, according to the Article 53 of the mentioned law, the Standing Committee of the National Assembly hold the discussion of the draft law with the people in case it is deemed that the draft law is related to many fields or directly connected to the rights and interests of the people.

6. Before the draft law submitted to the National Assembly, the law drafting committee shall organize consultations on the draft law in a wide and democratic way, and publish it on the Website so that the public can provide feedback. There shall be no discrimination towards gender, age, and women from the rural area and ethnic groups so that they can be involved in providing feedback in order to protect their legitimate interests, and the women migrant workers in factories are also involved in providing feedback as well. If the feedback is deemed reasonable, the law drafting committee shall study those feedbacks and take into its consideration to ensure the draft law's preciseness and comprehensiveness. When the draft law is submitted to the National Assembly for its consideration, the members of the National Assembly, especially the National Assembly Women's Caucus that represents the rights of women and children, can make comments on the mentioned draft law. Pursuant to the Law on Law Making of 2016, Article 7 states that the basic principle in making legislation must be in consistent with the conventions and international agreements to which the Lao PDR is a party. In the past, the women's caucus did not need to make any proposal on amendment to the proposed draft laws as the law drafting process has always been conducted based on the principle of consistency with international obligations.

Access to justice

7. **Please provide data on how amendments to article 41 of the Constitution, which provides for the submission of complaints and petitions by citizens of the State party (para. 26), have improved effective access to justice for women, in particular rural women and women from ethnic groups, and indicate whether steps have been taken to measure the impact of these complaint mechanisms in relation to eliminating gender stereotypes and intersecting discrimination when administering justice. Please also indicate the measures in place to harmonize customary law and formal legal systems, given that, in some ethnic communities, women are traditionally excluded from participating as parties in conflict resolution processes. Please also provide information on steps taken to address the persistent barriers, including financial, geographic and linguistic, that prevent rural women and women from ethnic groups from gaining access to justice. Please provide examples of cases, if any, in which the provisions of the Convention have been referred to by the national courts and indicate the measures taken to increase the legal literacy of women, in particular those living in rural and remote areas, with regard to procedures available to them to enforce their rights under the Convention, challenge discrimination and obtain redress. Please also provide information on steps taken to ensure due diligence by law**

enforcement personnel when conducting investigations in order to encourage reporting and avoid revictimization.

Reply

8. The Lao multi-ethnic people have the right to lodge complaints in compliance with the law as provided in the Constitution, Article 41. In order to protect the general and specific interests of the people, especially women in the rural areas and women of ethnic groups, their access to justice has been improved. They can lodge complaints through the Executive, Judicial and Legislative organs, and these three mechanisms are obliged to handle complaints in conformity with the laws and in due time. Currently, the National Assembly opens a free of charge hotline 156 and the Provincial People's Assembly also opens the same hotline. Calls can be made during the Ordinary Sessions of the National Assembly and of the Provincial People's Assembly. It is obvious that the Government opens all channels to facilitate and provide easier access for the people. In 2017, the National Assembly received a total of 477 complaints and 373 of which could be resolved. The resolution to the complaints were mainly on disputes of land and inheritance.

9. Currently, the National Assembly has yet to conduct assessment of its complaints handling mechanism, but it is recognized that this is an important issue that the Lao PDR needs to pay attention to in order to ensure that the rights of the Lao multi-ethnic people are fully promoted and protected.

10. The Lao PDR refers to the Village Mediation Unit to resolve and mediate minor disputes. The Village Mediation Unit must have the representative of the Women's Union in its composition. This is one of the measures that the Lao PDR is taken in order to create a favourable condition for women's participation in the mediation process at the village level.

11. The Government of the Lao PDR attaches importance to the promotion and protection of human rights of the multi-ethnic people, especially of women in rural and remote areas, so that they can understand and have access to justice. This is done by actively disseminating and providing knowledge on human rights, especially on the protection of the rights and interests of women and children in the society. and the relevant state authority at central and local levels must understand this issue to promote the access of people to the justice process; the People's Supreme Court has published a book titled "How to Access to Justice" in a total of 3,000 copies to distribute to the people free of charge. Although the domestic legal system does not allow the court, prosecutor or other law enforcement officers to directly apply the provisions of the treaties, but the judgments of the court or the decisions made by relevant authorities shall not conflict with the provisions of the treaties to which the Lao PDR is a party since the provisions of the treaties have been incorporated in the national legislation that is applicable.

12. The steps undertaken to ensure the fair practice of the law enforcement officers during the investigation are provided in Articles 42 and 43 of the Amended Law on the Office of the People's Prosecutor 2017 as follows:

- Article 42 (Amended) stipulates that the monitoring and inspection of the law application by the investigation agency are carried on throughout the stages of investigation with completeness, thoroughness and objectivity in order to:
    - Determine whether the application of regulations and laws by the investigation agency is in compliance with or against the law;
    - Determine whether the investigation methodology and preventive measures such as premises search, arrest, remand detention, temporary release of the suspect are conducted in compliance with or against the law;

- Ensure that the investigation agencies strictly apply the Law on Criminal Procedures;
- Determine whether or not, to issue an order to open an investigation by the Head of the investigation agency, based on the sufficient or lack thereof firm evidence and in compliance with the laws;
- Thoroughly investigate and find out all the related offences committed and not allow impunity for the offender;
- Find out the motives and circumstances of the offence in order to formulate addressing measures.

- Article 43 (Amended) provides the rights and duties of the Office of the People's Prosecutor in the monitoring and inspection of the application of regulations and laws by the investigation agency that the Office of the People's Prosecutor has the rights and duties within its scope of responsibilities as follows:
  - Request for case files, documents, property in dispute and information in relation to the offence from the investigation agency;
  - Participate in the investigation of criminal cases or perform the investigation by itself, if necessary;
  - Terminate the order of the investigation agency that is not in compliance with the law or not reasonable;
  - Recommend in writing on how to perform the investigation, to take preventive measures, to find the offenders, and to classify the offences;
  - Issue orders, for instance, order to detain the suspect, arrest, remand detention, release of suspect and conduct search of for non-confrontational or non-urgent cases;
  - Issue extensions for the investigation period and extension of remand detention period as provided by the law;
  - Return the case files with recommendation for additional investigation to the investigation agency;
  - Issue an order to the Head of the investigation agency to order the investigation officer, who has violated the Law on the Criminal Procedure, to stop his/her involvement with the investigation;
  - Issue an order for the investigation, case dismissal or suspension of the prosecution;
  - Exercise the rights and perform other duties as provided by the laws.

National machinery for the advancement of women

13. **Please indicate how the merger of the National Commission for Mothers and Children and the National Commission for the Advancement of Women to form the National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children, in 2016, has strengthened the national machinery for the protection of women's human rights and gender equality. Please indicate whether the aforementioned entity has a clearly defined mandate and adequate human, financial and technical resources. Please also specify whether there is effective coordination between the National Commission and local commissions at the provincial, district and village levels, in particular those situated in rural and remote areas of the country. Please also indicate whether the Convention and the Committee's general recommendations are being integrated into capacity-**

building programmes for lawmakers, judges, prosecutors, lawyers and law enforcement officials. Please also inform the Committee about how article 6 (11) of the amended Law on State Budget of 2015 is applied in practice and whether it incorporates a gender perspective. Please also elaborate on steps taken to establish an independent national human rights institution whose competencies include issues relating to the equality of women and men, in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).

Reply

14. The merging of the National Commission for the Advancement of Women and the National Commission for Mothers and Children in compliance with Decree 110/PM, dated 29 March 2018, on the Organization and Functions of the National Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mother-Child (NCAWMC) has strengthened the national mechanism for the promotion of the advancement of women, gender equality, and the matters of mother and child in general, specifically to protect the rights of women and the right of the child.

15. The office relocation of the Secretariat of the NCAWMC to the Central Lao Women's Union (LWU) is to increase and strengthen the two national mechanisms so that the coordination between the NCAWMC and LWU is more smooth, harmonious and in line with the government's policies. This is to make the organization more compact and effective.

16. At the national level, the NCAWMC has specified the roles and duties, personnel, including clear reporting system, as well as having sufficient budget allocation by the Government. This means that the NCAWMC and LWU have their own respective budgets. At sectorial level, the NCAWMC has its own working network in the ministries/organizations, and it also has the budget for the sectorial implementations. However, the budget at the national and sectorial levels is still limited.

17. At the local level, the CAWMC of the provinces, districts and villages coordinate through the Women's Union at the respective levels. The specification of the coordination mechanism of the local CAWMC through this Women's Union is to increase harmonious coordination and to strengthen the 2 mentioned mechanisms in promoting the advancement of women, gender equality; protecting the rights of women and the right of the child; and development of the child.

18. The NCAWMC has integrated the contents of the Convention and General Comments of the CEDAW Committee into its policies and legislations such as the Law on the Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children, National Strategy for Gender Equality (2016–2025), Five-Year National Action Plan for Gender Equality III (2016–2020), and National Action Plan on the Protection and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children (2014–2020).

19. At the same time, the NCAWMC in various sectors are encouraged to apply the Convention and General Comments by the Committee to their respective strategies and action plans, which some sectors are successful in doing so, for example, the Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture, Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Public Works and Transport, and the Ministry of Energy and Mines. NCAWMC still continues to focus on encouraging other sectors to develop their own strategy, action plan and program including the Justice Sector. Together with this, these sectors have disseminated the Convention and General Comments by the Committee to the law makers, judges, prosecutors, lawyers and law enforcement officers in order to integrate into their respective applications.

20. In the adopted amended Law on Budget which provides for budget allocation with gender perspective, the NCAWMC has continued to implement the Law by widely disseminating to support the incorporation of gender perspective into the national plan and budget. Therefore, the Budget Program has been initiated to focus on gender perspective which was supported by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in order to develop the trainers' network for gender perspective in ministries and organizations, and to produce a Budget Training Manual focusing on gender perspective. In early 2018, the NCAWMC successfully completed 4 activities under the mentioned program: 1. National review on the budget focusing on gender perspective in the Lao PDR, 2. Establishment and development of the Budget Training Manual focusing on gender perspective, 3. Providing training for trainers, 4. Organizing seminars on the budget focusing on gender perspective. From the 4 mentioned activities, we can outline future directions such as 1. Continue organizing more seminars for target groups; 2. Increase the development and promotion of knowledge and understanding on the budget focusing on gender perspective in the Lao PDR; 3. Continue developing the methodologies and forms for local authorities in order to recommend to them on how to incorporate the gender perspective focusing approach in their budget planning process; 4. Focus on the target groups that are high ranking senior officials to support future actions; 5. Develop the budget process with gender perspective focusing approach, and launch pilot tests in some ministries/sectors to test the model and learn from good practices on the budget process with gender perspective focusing approach. However, for implementing such directions, sufficient budget is required.

21. Although a national human rights institution based on the Paris Principles is not established in the Lao PDR, the Government has established various National Commissions to promote and protect human rights, and implement the obligations under the Human Rights Conventions and Optional Protocols to which the Lao PDR is a party, such as the National Steering Committee on Human Rights, the National Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mother-Child, the National Commission for the People with Disabilities and the Elderly, the National Committee on Anti-Human Trafficking, which act as the inter-agency institutional arrangements in the promotion and protection of human rights, rights and advancement of women, rights of children, rights of people with disabilities and the elderly, and rights of the victims of human trafficking. However, the Lao PDR has conducted study and research on the Paris Principles-based national human rights institution, and has exchanged lessons with countries that have their own national human rights institution. For the time being, the Lao PDR is not ready to establish an independent human rights institution it will continue to strengthen and improve the existing national mechanisms such as the above-mentioned commissions, the offices of people's prosecutors, people's courts, and the Justice Committee of National Assembly aiming at working together in the promotion and protection of human rights in the Lao PDR.

Temporary special measures

22. **Reference is made in the report to initiatives outlined in the eighth five-year national socioeconomic development plan, covering the period 2016–2020, to facilitate the participation of women in political and public life (para. 33). Please indicate the criteria applied when the plan's targets were adopted and the measures in place to ensure their implementation. Please also provide information on additional measures, including temporary special measures, put in place in order to incorporate a gender perspective into policies and budgets and formulate, implement and evaluate affirmative action to accelerate progress for long-lasting impact, including in political processes, decision-making positions in education and male-dominated sectors of employment, with a view**

to achieving substantive equality. Please specify whether the State party envisages the adoption of other temporary special measures, in particular those that would benefit women from ethnic groups, in accordance with article 4 (1) of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures, in order to accelerate the full and equal participation of women in all areas covered by the Convention, especially those in which they are disadvantaged or underrepresented.

Reply

23. The Lao PDR provides opportunities for women so that they are more involved in political matters of the country. This is indicated by the increasing numbers of women who are leaders and responsible for decision making. This is because the Government has policies and plans to ensure the involvement of women of all ethnic groups in such matters. At present, there is the Resolution No. 030/PBCP, dated 03 January 2018, on the Criteria of the Leading and Managerial Officials that defines the requirement and criteria of the officials who shall become leaders at each level, from the country's strategic planning level to the village administrative level. In order to enhance the mentioned resolution, the Government is drafting instructions for its implementation, which shall determine the criteria of candidates for elections to the Party at each level. Apart from the criteria for political ethics, education and abilities, it shall also determine the target candidates that are women and those for ethnic groups.

24. Some measures that are important to accelerate the progress in achieving gender equality, especially in the education sector and areas which employ only male employees. The Ministry of Education and Sports recognizes the importance of promoting gender equality by putting policies in place during each period to promote more involvement of women in the education field. It can be observed that the number of civil servants at administrative posts have increased from 9,235 people in 2006–2007 to 27,948 people in 2014–2015. This data indicates that there are more female than male civil servants in the position of category 8, and at present, there is an increased number of female leaders in the position of Ministers, Heads of Offices, Director-Generals of the Department of Personnel, Department of General Education, and Department of Finance. These positions are being held by women for the very first time. Furthermore, at the local level, there are more females in the position of Directors of the provincial Departments of Education and Sports.

25. For employment in some areas which employ only male employees, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has collected employment data from unstable occupations in the Lao PDR, and it is observed that male employment covers 84 per cent of the total workforce. The sectors are considered as highly unstable occupation is agriculture and fishery (93 per cent) and sales (73 per cent). From the analysis, it is found that in the Lao PDR there are relatively less women in the labour market, and the majority of them are working in the sectors that are highly unstable and high risks. 61 per cent of women workers are family workers with no salary compared with 26 per cent of male, and only 25 per cent of female workers are self-employed compared with 50 per cent of male. Thus, in order to ensure that the workforce working outside the labour system is shifted into the labour system, an Action Plan has been adopted for the promotion and cooperation of decent work. The overall strategy of this Action Plan consists of 4 important elements that are related to 4 priorities, namely: 1). Promote decent work (especially in the rural areas), development of entrepreneurship, and technical labour skills based on the labour market requirement that is constantly changing; 2). Continue to ratify and implement the International Labour Conventions in general, and in specific the implementation of the Labour Law (2014); 3). Promote and increase social protection; 4) Promote and

develop the capacity of the tripartite mechanisms and organizations, and to develop technical capacity for (1) effective combined effort towards achieving the national development goals, and for (2) promotion and serving the interests of the respective organizations and its members. Each element of the Action Plan is linked and supplementary. For example, the improvement of labour skills of the rural workforce, the implementation of the Labour Law at the local level, and the promotion of small and medium enterprises is the core for the development and the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Promotion of Employment in Rural Areas. Likewise, the development and implementation of the National Strategic Plan on Social Protection is also crucial in tackling the issue of unstable employment.

26. In addition, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has adopted measures to enable women in rural and remote areas to participate in the development of labour skills. Data on the needs of labour skill development has been collected periodically, and conducted trainings, tests, and skills training certificates have been awarded to the people at local level, especially for electricians, construction workers, and cooks. Since 2016 up to present, the Department of Development and Employment has conducted vocational training and quality labour skill development by testing the labour skills based on the National Labour Skills Standard as follows:

Table 1
Skills development based on economic areas

No	*Year*	*Industrial Sector*	*Agriculture Sector*	*Service Sector*
1	2016	2,018 (396 female) people	–	1,749 (909 female) people
2	2017	1,276 (37 female) people	–	1,363 (954 female) people
3	2018–Present	130 (1 female) people	–	19 (15 female) people
Total		**3,424 (434 female) people**		**3,331 (1,878 female) people**

Table 2
Labour skills training and development

No	*Training topics*	*Participants*
1	Basic skills training and development for migrant workers in poor districts	420 people, 139 female
2	Training on change of work, occupation, and skills for vacant positions to the unemployed, and for workers who wish to work abroad	141 people, 43 female
3	Skills training and development for skilled workers who have never been trained before	100 people, 17 female
Total		**661 people, 199 female**

- The Lao PRD has taken some measures for the benefit of ethnic women, mainly:
  - Measures to eliminate traditional mindset in remote areas in order to provide opportunities for ethnic women to be involved in every learning process, to allow the involvement of the Women's Union in all actions, to incorporate gender perspective into the curriculum of formal education and non-formal education, modification of the curriculum and illustrations in text books to reflect gender equality;

- Training on gender perspective to the provincial educational administrators and school teachers in order to insert gender perspective into their teaching modules as a way to raise awareness for students to pay special attention to women and those of ethnic groups. Furthermore, the rights of women and children have been taught to the students;
- Scholarship at primary and secondary levels are granted to female and male students equally. Ethnic schools in some provinces are also given equal quota numbers for female and male students.

- At present, the education and sports sector sets out measures for each village to have places for education services, and the people at the remote area have been trained to become teachers for that particular area. This is called education outside of school. Furthermore, there are also mobile education services.
- The health sector has its own media means and publications to promote access to health, especially in the ethnic languages, and for every 5 kilometres, people can access to medical services (There is a mobile unit reaching out to the people in the remote areas);
- The Ministry of Home Affairs is drafting a National Strategy on Ethnic Affairs as the reference for various sectors in implementing it with common understanding throughout the country. However, this process is still slow due to budget constraints.

Stereotypes and harmful practices

27. **Please elaborate on measures in place to address intersecting forms of discrimination against women, especially given the multi-ethnic nature of the State party. Please provide information on steps taken to develop a comprehensive strategy to change social and cultural patterns that reinforce traditional gender stereotypes, in particular among ethnic groups, with regard to the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society, targeting schools in particular, as well as negative media messaging and portrayals of women. Please also specify whether there has been progress in developing awareness-raising campaigns targeting women from ethnic groups in collaboration with civil society and women's organizations, with a view to enhancing a positive and non-stereotypical portrayal of women, as recommended previously by the Committee (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/7, para. 22).**

Reply

28. To address all forms of discrimination against women in the Lao PDR, a country consisting of many ethnic groups, with each ethnic group having its own traditions, religions and beliefs, the Government has actively implement equality policies and consistently promoted harmony among the ethnic groups, and has carried out some measures as follows:

- Emphasize on grassroots development and educate the ethnic groups with contents and methodologies that are suitable with the target groups;
- Rely on the influential ethnic leaders, who play important roles in maintaining harmony and have deep understanding of their respective cultures;
- Apply the democratic approach with equality for all and in all aspects, and participation for all;
- Develop economic and sociocultural infrastructure in the remote areas;
- Increase the harmonious coordination among the relevant parties.

29. The Lao PDR attaches importance to promoting gender equality by amending the Constitution, laws, and make laws and plans as references for implementation. Furthermore, various sectors have focused on disseminating and developing laws and regulations so that ethnic women in the remote areas can exercise and understand their rights and duties. For instance, the Ministry of Education and Sports has heavily invested on the Education Strategic Plan and Human Resources Development Strategy by focusing on the incorporation of gender equality into the education functions. In particular, it works with Plan International to provide training on gender equality to teachers in some remote areas. The Ministry also works with UN-WOMEN to organize activities to combat violence against women in schools.

30. To provide the conditions for development of ethnic women and to ensure the implementation of a more effective protection of women and children from violence, in 2017, the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism cooperated with Gender Development Association (GDA) to implement the Ethnic Women Promotion Program so that they can access to information on gender perspective. The main objective of this program is to strengthen both female and male officials working in the field of media to be capable in disseminating information on gender perspective to the people, especially ethnic women at the local level, providing them with access to information on gender perspective via radio, television and loudspeaker in the local areas.

31. The progress is made in raising awareness of women in general, specifically ethnic women on different topics and by various forms of dissemination, advocacy and education through the network of the Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mothers and Children at all levels, women's organizations at every level and the media sector civil society organizations to enable women be more aware of and understand Government policies, the Constitution and laws related to the promotion and protection of women's rights and interests, gender equality including combating violence against women. This is to increase the protection of their rights and to involve them in the development and improvement of their families and their local areas.

32. For example, the awareness raising campaign on the topic of combating violence against women and children has made significant progress in the process of building of development family, village and district relevant to exercising gender equality rights without violence in the family, especially against women and children (details are in the reply to question 6).

Violence against women

33. **Reference is made in the report to significant legislative and institutional advancements to combat violence against women in the State party, including the adoption of the Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children. Please indicate the measures in place to ensure the full implementation of the law and whether sufficient human, financial and technical resources have been made available to support it. Please specify whether the provisions outlined in articles 48 and 49 of the law that encourage family mediation in cases of violence against women are being reconsidered. Please also indicate the measures envisaged for providing adequate training to members of the judiciary, law enforcement personnel, public health officials and village mediation units in identifying the causes of gender-based violence when addressing individual cases.**

Reply

34. Apart from widely disseminating, advocating and raising awareness regarding gender equality and combatting violence against women, another measure is the Prime Minister's Decree No. 309/PM, on Poverty and Development Standards for 2012–2015 which outlines the development standards and criteria, which provided for a criteria that families, villages, and districts must exercise gender equality rights and without violence in the family, especially against women and children, in order to qualify for a "development" status. In this regard, gender equality and elimination of domestic violence was incorporated into the development initiatives of the government, as one of the main standards and criteria to achieve the "Development" status, at all local levels. Through actual implementation of these measures in 2013–2015, it can be assessed that , more families were practicing gender equality and domestic violence has been reduced, women became more aware of their rights also reflected in more women's involvement in each function of the village organizations, especially in the women's savings and lending groups, village administrations including Village Mediation Units, village committees for the health of mother and child, and other development functions.

35. In order to effectively implement combating and preventing violence against women, the Government of the Lao PDR has recruited and placed officials and civil servants, including allocated budget for the mentioned function based on its capacity. When compared with the function requirement, the budget is still limited, and it is necessary to upgrade the knowledge and ability of specific field for the officials, who perform the functions relating to this issue.

36. Article 48 and 49 of the Law on the Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children provides that the solution to minor cases violence against women and children with minor damage to the feeling, property and economy is to educate and compromise among family members.

37. Apart from amending and adopting laws, developing plans as references to solve violence to protect and to make a clear understanding on the issues or the causes of violence, the Government has made dissemination to raise awareness on the laws and human rights for the people in society and for the relevant government officials, in particular police and military officers, members of the National Assembly, judges, prosecutors via the promotion and protection mechanisms for human rights at national level; seminars were held on the topic of "Access to Justice for Women" for justice officials, in provinces, Vientiane Capital, and the People's Supreme Court, Office of the Supreme People's Prosecutor, the investigation police authorities, prison officers, District Justice Office, and members of the National Assembly. There were 216 participants with 42.6 per cent females, local people and officials from 40 villages of 5 districts in Vientiane Capital, a total number of 182 participants with 39 per cent females. Due to limited budget, the mentioned dissemination and training could not be carried out consistently and broadly. Therefore, to assist the legal officials or law enforcement officers in understanding and being aware of violence against women, it is necessary to organize seminars and trainings on the mentioned issue for the Ministry of Justice, Justice Departments of the provinces and Vientiane Capital, Justice Office of the districts, and the Village Mediation Units, judges of the provinces and Vientiane Capital, district or municipal prosecutors, investigation police authorities, Ministry of Public Security, Public Security Divisions of the provinces and Vientiane Capital, Public Security Offices of the districts, village police, including doctors at central and local levels.

38. **Please provide updated information on the number of cases of violence against women that have been processed since the adoption of the Law on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children and how many**

have resulted in prosecution. Please also indicate whether there have been further developments in the establishment of a standard system for the regular collection of statistical data on violence against women, disaggregated by type of violence, ethnic group and the circumstances in which the violence was committed, including information on perpetrators and victims and their relationship, as previously recommended by the Committee (ibid., para. 24).

Reply

39. Since the Lao PDR has adopted the Law on the Preventing and Combating Violence against Women, the Government has focused on disseminating this law through different means to make people be awareness of and understanding the violence issues in families. Nevertheless, violence still occurs in many circumstances in many areas. In helping victims of violence at the Centre for Counselling and Protection of Women and Children of the Central Lao Women's Union, in 2016–2017, this Centre provided counselling face-to-face and over the phone free of charge for women and children. There were 712 counselling cases with 418 issues. The main issues were divorce, dispute on marital property, physical abuse, child rape, human trafficking, debt, etc. The victims were provided with temporary and safe accommodation. 59 victims with 52 female were given emotional treatment, and out of whom 29 people were under the age of 18; the Centre could also help 50 victims return to their families. At the moment there are 9 people still staying at the Centre.

40. The People's Supreme Court encourages, promotes, monitors and inspects the performance of functions, especially the proceeding by the People's Court at each level in order to ensure that the consideration or the proceeding is quick, transparent, accurate and fair. The President of the People's Supreme Court has issued a Decision No. 233/SPC, dated 16 May 2011, on the Organization and Activities of the Department of Technical Management and Court Statistics, which provides technical support to the leaders of the People's Supreme Court in terms of analysing the legal provisions which still lack common understanding, summarizing the promulgated laws and regulations in the justice system, collecting and analysing the court's statistics, and drafting a new legislation in accordance with the current socioeconomic development and requirements; this is a good step to collect data on the duties of the court, including the cases that have been considered and judged. However, the collection of cases is done collectively, but not specifically to violence against women as this needs to be categorized according to ethnic groups, circumstances for the cause of violence as well as the data on the relationship between the offender and victim of the offence.

41. **Please indicate the measures in place to prevent the stigmatization of victims of violence and abuse in the State party, in particular in the light of the results of the Lao national survey on women's health and life experiences of 2014, which indicated that 43.2 per cent of women who encountered partner violence did not report the incident owing to embarrassment and the fear of social stigma. Please also indicate the measures in place to ensure that perpetrators of acts of violence are prosecuted and adequately punished and the victims provided with adequate protection, assistance and reparation, including compensation.**

Reply

42. The Government has adopted and made efforts to implement the National Action Plan on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Children in the Lao PDR, The NAP outlines the work plan to solve violence consisting of 3 main programs, such as:

- Program for the Caring, Support and Strengthening for the Victims of Violence. This program is to ensure that women and children, who are victims of violence, have access to the services and assistance and are satisfied with the services:
  - Physical and emotional treatment, in the event of emergency;
  - Safe accommodation;
  - Counselling and assistance services;
  - Legal support and assistance;
  - Assistance and care for the children of the victims;
  - Long term strengthening for female victims.
- Program for the Protection of Victims of Violence and the Legal Proceedings in Compliance with the Legal Procedure with the purpose to improve the procedures undertaken by the police officers and prosecutors for harmonious coordination. This is in order to encourage and promote the people, including female victims or eye witness, to report to the officials:
  - Function procedures of the police officers and prosecutors;
  - Justice procedure.
- Coordination and Incorporation Program:
  - Make recommendations and code of conduct for actual implementation or joint-service between the concerned sectors that are responsible for resolving violence against women;
  - Risk evaluation and management;
  - System for case data recording and case files keeping;
  - Encourage the community to participate in solving violence.

43. This program has not been fully enhanced by the relevant sectors because of shortage of officials, technical staffs, and budget.

44. The Lao PDR has increased methods to implement the Law on the Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children in every relevant sector so that it is more effective. This is done by encouraging and promoting the strict use of legal punishment measures on offenders; at the same time, it is focused on raising awareness on new laws and on the understanding that violence is a criminal offence, which violates human rights.

Trafficking and exploitation of prostitution

45. **According to information before the Committee, the State party is a source and destination country for women and girls subjected to sex trafficking and forced labour. It is indicated in the report that, in 2015, a draft law on combating trafficking in persons was adopted, along with implementing mechanisms (para. 68). Please provide information on the number of cases of trafficking in persons, in particular women and girls, that have been investigated since the adoption of the legislation. Please also indicate the measures in place to identify the alleged perpetrators, including those who are involved in organized crime, and specify the nature of the sanctions imposed. Please also provide details on the functions of the Prevention and Anti-Trafficking Department established within the General Police Department (para. 67). Please indicate the specific measures taken to address the increased risk of trafficking for sexual exploitation and forced labour faced by women, adolescents and girls from rural and remote areas**

along the border regions owing to the commercialization of agriculture. Please also specify whether civil society, including women's non-governmental organizations, is fully involved in public policy discussions to combat trafficking in persons through the national steering committee on the subject (para. 66).

Anti-Human Trafficking Secretariat

46. Human trafficking is still a problem in the Lao PDR. The main reasons are that the living conditions of some Lao people are still poor, the development gap between cities and rural areas, limited education level, and the labour skills level not matching the requirements of the labour market. This can be considered as the main problems for Lao migrant workers in general and particularly for the young workers to find jobs in large cities or in foreign countries in the hope of seeking higher income to support their families. In some cases, this led to young people being deceived to work in foreign countries and fall victims to forced prostitution, forced labour, engagement or wed to foreigners with false agendas. In this regard, the Government has attached importance to and focused on solving and addressing the causes of problem as well as the assistance of human trafficking victims by establishing the National Steering Committee for Anti-Human Trafficking in 2004, establishing the Police Department of Prevention and Anti-Human Trafficking under the Ministry of Public Security, the centres to support and assist human trafficking victims, and periodically adopting policies, the Law on Anti-Human Trafficking (2015) and the National Action Plan, with a budget allocated to enable the implementation of the NAP. The relevant officials have performed their duties, with full capacity responsibility, in preventing and combating human trafficking. However, human trafficking still occurs in the Lao PDR. In 2017, 31 cases of human trafficking were prosecuted (15 new cases and 16 outstanding cases from 2016), 55 accused with 17 female, 35 victims with 22 female (14 people were below the age of 18 that were all female); 19 cases were closed, and 12 cases are being proceeded by the police.

47. In identifying the offender as outlined in Article 2 of the Law on Anti-Human Trafficking, it is stated that human trafficking is the search, kidnap, mobilization, transportation or delivery, picking up people domestically or overseas, providing accommodation or hiding place through persuasion, suggestion, trick, bribe, inducement, fomentation, abuse of power, by force, threat, debt bondage, concealed child adoption, concealed engagement, concealed marriage, force to carry pregnancy, force to beg and take photo, slavery, prostitution, forced prostitution, trading of organs and other items that violate the law and culture of the nation or other benefit seeking purposes. Also, it is indicated in Article 15 regarding the prosecution of offenders that when there is a complaint from an individual or organization or when the offender turns oneself in or when there is a trace of human trafficking offence, the concerned authority shall inspect, examine, record the testimony of the victims or complainants including witnesses, apply investigation methods and preventive measures as outlined in the Law on Criminal Procedures as well as looking after the confidentiality and safety of the related people. In addition to the law, in identifying the offenders and victims in compliance with such law, the concerned officials perform the interrogation according to two forms, such as the form for the prevention and anti-human trafficking police, and the form for other concerned parties. During the prosecution of human trafficking cases, the Lao PDR considers the victims as the core in order to ensure the rights of the victims in compliance with the Law on Anti-Human Trafficking and the Lao PDR's relevant international obligations. The offenders shall be punished in accordance with the law where the punishment is outlined in various articles as follows:

- Under Article 72 and 73 of the Law, that the offender shall be educated, disciplined, pay compensation for the damage or face criminal sanctions, depending on the severity of the case;
- Under Article 86 of the Law, the education measures for the individual, entity, organization and family that did not cooperate in anti-human trafficking, in particular the prevention, protection, assistance to the victims, and in the prosecution of human trafficking cases, shall be educated and warned;
- Article 87 of the Law provides for the disciplinary measures against the Government officials who violate the prohibition as outlined in Article 72 of the Law. In the event that the violation is not deemed as severe nor considered as a criminal act, and that such action does not cause any serious damage, but due lack of sincerity to make report and attempt to hide or cover the wrongdoing, that official shall be disciplined for such action in compliance with the laws and regulations;
- Article 88 outlines the civil measures that an individual, entity, organization or family violating the Law, where such violation has caused damage to others shall be liable to the damages that was caused;
- Article 89 stipulates criminal measures to any individual who committed an offence related to human trafficking shall be imprisoned between five to fifteen years, and shall be fined between 10,000,000 Kip to 100,000,000 Kip, and property forfeiture as outlined in the Penal Law. In cases of repeat offense, group offense, involve a child victim, there are two or more victims, the victim is the relative of the offender, or resulting in severe injuries, disability, handicapped or mental disorder to the victim; the offender shall be imprisoned between fifteen to twenty years, and shall be fined between 100,000,000 Kip to 500,000,000 Kip, and shall have one's property forfeited as outlined in the Penal Law. In the event the offence has caused permanent disability to the victim, or HIV infection, the offender shall be sentenced to life imprisonment, and shall be fined between 500,000,000 Kip to 1,000,000,000 Kip, and shall have one's property forfeited as outlined in the Penal Law or sentenced to death;
- Any person who prepares and attempts to commit the offence shall also be punished.

48. The Government of the Lao PDR focuses on the preventing and combating human trafficking by imposing policies, laws, regulations, the National Action Plan, establishing the National Anti-Human Trafficking Committee, which has the rights and duties as follows:

- To study policies, strategic plans, action plans, plans and programs related to anti-human trafficking and submit to the Government for consideration;
- To advocate and disseminate the policies, laws and regulations; provide information on the work on anti-human trafficking to the people and other parties domestically and overseas;
- To steer, monitor, and inspect the Anti-Human Trafficking Committee at the provincial level;
- To steer, encourage, monitor, and coordinate with the ministries, organizations, local authorities, and other relevant parties related to anti-human trafficking;
- To organize workshops and exchange knowledge and experiences related to anti-human trafficking;
- To contact, cooperate with foreign countries regionally and internationally on the issue of anti-human trafficking;

- To summarize the activities of anti-human trafficking and regularly report to the Government;
- To exercise other rights and perform other duties as provided for by the laws and regulations.

49. To solve the risk factors related to human trafficking in the form of seeking sex benefits and forced labour, especially from women and children living near the border and in remote areas, the Government has adopted the policy to combat human trafficking by prioritizing the protecting and combating function by way of disseminating and educating the public on the awareness and understanding of the negative effect and danger of human trafficking so that they would watch out from falling prey or victim of human trafficking. The Government also focuses on the case proceedings against offender, and provide protection and help to victims in a timely and safely manner such as the Government has raise awareness about safe labour migration to young people in Savannakhet Province, publicized the bad effect of human trafficking to the people in 5 provinces that the Lao-China railway project running through, which have the risk for human trafficking, namely, Luang Namtha, Oudomxay, Luang Prabange, Vientiane Province and the Vientiane Capital. Workshops have been organized to disseminate laws and regulations to the ministries and organizations, including the judicial and police officers at the central and local levels. The purpose of this dissemination is to further raise awareness and understanding to various sectors regarding anti-human trafficking, and this can be implemented in the same way throughout the country. Every year, an event is held to commemorate International Anti-Human Trafficking Day in order to raise public awareness. In addition, in 2017, television and radio programs by the Ministry of Public Security were produced. The programs are called: "People's Fight against Human Trafficking" which are on air every Saturday and Sunday.

50. The Lao PDR has carried out the foreign policy of international cooperation with various organizations in coordinating and implementing anti-human trafficking. Under the Law on Anti-Human Trafficking, Article 6 prescribes the principles of cooperation and participation of all parties both organizations and individuals which are equality, respect for independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity of nations and in line with the international treaties to which the Lao PDR is a party. Therefore, the Lao PDR has prioritized the cooperation with Development Partners, International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs) and Civil Society Organizations such as the Australia-Asia Program to Combat Trafficking in Persons (AAPTIP), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons (UN-ACT), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Organization for Migration (IOM), International Labour Organization (ILO), World Vision, Care International, Village Focus International, Alliance Anti-Human Trafficking, Save the Children, Friends International, Institute For Legal Support and Technical Assistance, the Asia Foundation, the Light Foundation and others, which indicates as follows:

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has chaired the Human Trafficking Working Group (HTWG) together with the UN-ACT 3 times with the participation of relevant government agencies, embassies, international organizations, international non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders;
- Cooperation with UNICEF in conducting training courses on testing for legal and social assistance to enable children to have access to justice, especially young offenders, child victims, and child witnesses. There was also the dissemination of the manuals and the application of the Law on Juvenile Justice among justice officials to enable them be aware of, understand and implement the law in a unified form;

- Cooperation with the Australia-Asia Program to Combat Trafficking in Persons (AAPTIP) to create a teaching timetable on the investigation of human trafficking cases and organize training courses for trainers in the Police Academy for efficient teaching, completed the manual on identifying victims of human trafficking, as well as provided training to the relevant officials in the northern, central, and southern regions of the country. This will enable the police officers to identify victims of human trafficking and open the investigation in order to proceed with the cases on human trafficking, completed the case database regarding human trafficking as well as provided training to the police divisions in charge of combating and preventing human trafficking nationwide in using database system for the quick, accurate and uniform performance of their duties related to anti-human trafficking.

Participation in political and public life

51. **Please provide information on the measures taken to replicate national advancements made in the participation of women in political and public life, given that women now represent 27.5 per cent of the National Assembly, at the provincial and local levels, where only 8 per cent of deputy provincial governors and 2.6 per cent of village chiefs are women (para. 81). Please also indicate whether measures have been taken to amend legislation and policies relating to the participation of women in political and public life, to incorporate provisions that promote the equal representation of women and men in leadership and decision-making at all levels and in all areas of political and public life and to develop women's leadership capabilities to occupy those roles. Please also indicate the measures taken to address the structural, gender-based and ethnic-based discriminatory practices and attitudes, including those originating from the social norms of ethnic groups, that prevent women from ethnic groups and rural women from enjoying full and equal participation in political decision-making, as previously recommended by the Committee (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/7, para. 32).**

Reply

52. Even though the numbers of women at leader's level have increased in some areas, the numbers at local level are still less because of many limitations. Therefore, the government of the Lao PDR are looking into various measures in order to enable women with the criteria to be recruited as civil servants, and so that they make more contribution to various levels of leadership post. For instance, the government is studying the Decree on the Ethnic Affairs in which Article 17 defines the policies for the development of staffs and civil servants as follows:

- Recruit and place officials and civil servants from ethnic groups into the state and government organization, the Lao Front for National Construction, and mass organizations in compliance with the laws and regulations;
- Develop the technical staffs and civil servants from ethnic groups in each area so that their knowledge and ability are upgraded in terms of theory and specific subject and then return to their local offices at grassroots level as the main officials of those such areas;
- Promote the implementation of policies on the officials and civil servants that carry out their duties in remote areas in relation to on site staff development in line with the actual circumstances of each period;
- Attend to developing the main officials and civil servants that are from ethnic groups, promote gender perspective or next generation of ethnic officials in line with the actual circumstances;

- Set plan to upgrade and develop officials and civil servants from ethnic groups for each target and category.

53. In order to enhance the knowledge and ability of female officials without any gender discrimination, and in order to develop certain theoretical level for female which falls under a criterion for higher ranked position, the Party and government, as a result, adopted some legal documents legislations as significant reference which allow women's involvement in every function, such as:

- The Central Party Organization Board issued the Notice No. 238/CPO, dated on 27 June 2017, on the selection of staffs for the 4 years bachelor degree program on Politics and Public Administration at the National Academy of Politics and Public Administration for 2017, Clause 1 on the objective, criteria and requirements of the applicant stated that: to prioritize staffs at district level, women and those from ethnic groups;
- The Resolution No. 032/PBCP, dated on 03 January 2018, on the Planning for the posts of Leading and Managerial officials, Article 7, Clause 2, ensures the composition of women, ethnic groups, and young officials to cover the majority, and the Guidelines No. 292/CPO, dated on 26 April 2018, on the Implementation of the Resolutions of the Central Party's Political Bureau on the Standards of Leading and Managerial officials, management and staffs planning which ensure the gender and ethnic components;
- The Instruction of the Central Party's Secretariat No. 04/CPS, dated on 07 May 2018, on the Preparation of the Party Committee Conferences of the Ministries and Organizations, Provinces and Vientiane Capital; Party Committees at the District, City, and Grassroots levels nationwide, Section II, Clause 1 of C stressed that women and representatives from ethnic groups must be increased, and the planning of staff structure must consist of existing staffs, new staffs, staffs from ethnic groups, and female staffs in appropriate numbers;
- Resolutions of the Congress X of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, Section IX, Clause 5, page 69, stated that focus must be put on staff development for the district in accordance with the 3 Builds Directive, especially the development on locally based staffs, staffs from ethnic groups and female staffs;
- The Document of the Nationwide Conference on Organization X, Section II, Clause II, Paragraph 2.1, page 48, stated that staffs planning must be done in a wider and democratic way, according to the procedure and regulations, the selection of targets must ensure all required standards, gender and ethnic components.

Education

54. **Reference is made in the report to significant legislative provisions and policies aimed at reforming the education system (para. 89). Please indicate the measures in place to implement those policies and specify the steps taken to address the findings of the fourth population and housing census (2015), which indicated that females were twice as likely not to have attended school as males and that 21 per cent of adult women had no educational attainment. Please also indicate whether effective measures, including temporary special measures, are in place to increase female enrolment in non-traditional areas of vocational training and technology- and science-based studies, including science, technology, engineering and mathematics at the secondary and tertiary levels. In that regard, please specify whether the impact of such measures has been evaluated and identify whether the integration of girls into the labour market is monitored after they have completed their education. Please also indicate**

whether there have been developments with regard to providing multicultural education for girls from ethnic groups as a means of accelerating their access to all levels of education. Please describe how the national policy on education (para. 89) has been implemented, including in rural and remote areas, and whether its impact has been evaluated. Please also provide data on the dropout rates of girls owing to pregnancy and the indirect costs of education that could impede the access of women and girls to education, in particular in female-headed households and ethnic communities. Please indicate whether alternative development funding sources have been identified as a means of reducing dependence on official international development assistance for education projects.

Reply

55. The findings from the Household and Population Census of 2015 indicate that the number of illiterate women without education are twice the number of male. The government, in particular the Ministry of Education and Sports, has evaluated and implemented the plan on education reform, and has focused on the teaching at primary training to the target groups that are illiterate, and has announced the completion of primary training throughout the country. Up to present, the Non-formal Education has continued to provide education to eliminate illiteracy, and provide primary training to children between the ages of 6–14 in remote areas with less education opportunity, benefiting were 4.819 children which consist of 2.131 girls and 2.688 boys from 4 poor districts in 2017–2018;

- Continued to eliminate and provide primary training to the illiterate community which consist of 19.840 people of whom 10.632 are female and 9.208 male;
- Profession promotion to women in remote areas on clothing and beautification;
- Received aid from UNESCO Bangkok and DVV International for education to underprivileged children.

56. Furthermore, for women to receive more education, the Ministry of Education and Sports has stipulated that the number of female students shall be increased in the Strategy for the Promotion of the Advancement of Women 2006–2015, and continued to set in its vision up to 2030, the Strategy for Gender Equality in Education and Sports Sector (2016–2015), as well as add to the understanding of the education administrators. In addition, Vocational Education Department has carried out the promotional policies for students that graduated from lower and upper secondary school so that more are enrolled in vocational schools;

- Improved the standard for vocational curriculum structure and to cover new curriculum program so that it is in line with the labour market requirement. Also, to move closer to other countries regionally and internationally;
- Increase the total enrolment and improve the equal accessibility to vocational education for female students, students from ethnic groups, and those from remote areas with less opportunity;
- Increase more seats so that students can enrol in vocational schools in traditional form, efficiency-based form, and coexisting form;
- Continue to increase the cooperation with business operators in regard to training, curriculum development and improvement to learning and teaching tools;
- Continue to encourage and promote more contribution from the private sectors and the society in regard to vocational education and professional training. The number of students in the lower level for industrial learning has increased and

the number of female students also increased from a total of 594 students with 106 females (2014–2015) up to 975 students with 339 females (2017–2018), and in the higher level there were 4,599 students with 816 females (2015–2016) which increased to 9,299 students with 1,202 females (2017–2018); (the number of students in vocational and professional fields for 2015–2016, 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 as appears in the Annex);

- The Higher Education Department has performed the policies by distributing the same number of seats for both female and male students (50/50) for education at university level, especially for the case where there is fewer female or no female enrolment in some subjects such as: architecture, engineering, law, and forestry. This number distribution refers to the distribution of enrolment seats in university for students from ethnic groups and for any gender in order to create equal education opportunity for every Lao citizen, and the estimation of opportunities for female students and students from ethnic groups. For example: the average test score for female students can be based on the minimum score not below 60/100 for the application test of each subject whereas the score for male students must not be below 70/100.

57. The Ministry of Education and Sports has incorporated living skills into the curriculum for primary education (Primary 2 and 3)/improve reading book; implement sex education curriculum that is related to gender perspective within the curriculum of the education sector by cooperation with UNFPA; organize the learning and teaching of sex education in lower secondary schools in the target province (Bokeo Province); continued to provide education allowance to 1,732 students with 932 females, and provide funding to promote school enrolment to 60 lower secondary schools in 15 target provinces of the Secondary Education Sector Development Program (SESDP), Grant Program from the Asia Development Bank; incorporate gender perspective to lower secondary schools in Phaoudom District, Bokeo District, in cooperation with Plan International; convince parents to send children to schools and insert the teaching of children's rights, gender equality, sex education, etc, into the general education curriculum.

58. Since 2015–2016, the Pedagogy Development Department, with the aid from Basic Education Quality and Access in the Lao PDR (BEQUAL), has provided funding for students from ethnic groups to study for Diploma in Primary School Teaching (9+3) for the 1st and 2nd batches and Bachelor in Primary School Teaching (12+4) in 29 districts of 5 provinces: Luang Namtha, Phongsaly, Khammouane, Savannakhet and Saravan, a total of 320 people which consist of 198 females and 122 males.

59. The Ministry of Education and Sports has yet to collect statistics on children who were school drop-outs due to pregnancy. In relation to this issue, the government has put its attention by raising awareness through different forms, for instance, the organization of the friend-teaching-friend activity. Sometimes, this activity is used to publicize and disseminate information on health issues; furthermore, a teaching manual on sex education was created to define the rights of children and reproductive health.

60. In addition to the government's budget or funding, there are business units, foundations, and banks which have policies to provide scholarship for students to study in certain majors.

Employment

61. **Please provide information on specific steps taken to promote women's employment in non-traditional, higher-wage sectors, including through the use of temporary special measures, and to enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, in line with International Labour Organization Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100). Please also include information on**

the engagement of women in the informal sector and measures in place to ensure their protection, the sustainability of their enterprises and their integration into the social protection floor, if any. Following the adoption, in 2013, of the amended Labour Law (para. 100), please indicate the steps taken to implement the Committee's recommendation to adopt a comprehensive approach to improving the working conditions of women in garment factories, including by providing a safe physical work environment, decent working hours and access to medical insurance, as well as protecting women against discrimination and exploitation in the workplace (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/7, para. 36). Please also provide details on whether labour inspection mechanisms are in place throughout the country and on particular trends identified in terms of the types of violations that women employees face and the mechanisms in place to address them. Please also indicate the measures taken to address the persistent gender wage gap.

Reply

62. Even though some women still stick to traditional occupation and have been continuing to do like this for many generations, for instance in agriculture (livestock and plantation). From such issue, the government tried to promote women to shift away from traditional occupations to the occupations that are equivalent to men. Policies on the right to work and just conditions of employment have been adopted and ensured by the Constitution, laws and various plans for more women's involvement in many professional fields. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare is an important organization for the development and building skills to match with the labour market requirement by imposing measures in order to open opportunity for women, and to enable them to develop their knowledge and skills for their occupation. For instance, the government was encouraged to issue the Decree on the Building and Development of Labour Skills No. 036/PM (2010), Article 3, paragraph 3 which is regarding the principles for the building and development of labour skills states that every Lao worker, both female and male, regardless of ethnic groups, have equal rights to have their skills developed. Since then, the door has been opened so that everyone can have access to the professional majors according to the field that one wants to study without any discrimination which are shown in the table below.

Lao citizens that graduated from higher education classified by gender and field in 2015

	Quantity	
Field of Study	*Female*	*Male*
Teachers Training and Educational Sciences	42,452	41,308
Art	930	1,649
Human Sciences	2,437	3,425
Social Sciences	5,576	8,403
Media and Information Technology	956	1,958
Business Administration	40,142	41,459
Law	6,211	25,086
Live Sciences	1,252	2,095
Physical Science	3,089	5,107
Mathematics and Statistics	1,343	2,624
Computer	3,158	5,335
Industry and Commerce	2,263	20,723
Manufacturing and Processing	2,662	2,060

Field of Study	Quantity	
	Female	Male
Architecture and Construction	714	5,893
Agriculture Forestry and Fishery	4,722	13,012
Veterinary	1,788	1,696
Health	14,445	8,559
Social Service	862	1,908
Individual Service	632	860
Logistics Service	636	4,604
Environmental Management	1,420	2,233
Security Service	2,629	26,227
No answer	11,111	21,304
Total	**151,430**	**247,528**

63. In the Law on Labour, Article 96 regarding gender equality to employment, and Article 143 regarding the prohibitions of workers especially in paragraph 2, 4 and 9, state that female workers can have access to employment according to the following details.

Citizens with jobs classified by gender and economic sector in 2015

Economic sector	Population holding permanent jobs	Male (%)	Female (%)
Agriculture, forestry and fishery	2,500,796	48.7	51.3
Mineral and mining industries	13,866	58.1	41.9
Processing industry	123,060	40.6	59.4
Electricity, gas, heat and air conditioning supply	9,290	82.2	17.8
Water supply, drainage, waste administration and management	4,110	58.9	41.1
Construction	103,102	52.9	47.1
Commerce, wholesale and retail, and car and motorcycle repair	183,539	34.9	65.1
Transportation and warehouse	28,257	90.9	9.1
Accommodation and catering services	20,664	33.1	66.9
Information and communication technology	7,474	65.3	34.7
Finance and insurance	11,961	49.2	50.8
Real estate	348	53.2	46.8
Professional, scientific and technical activities	15,184	45.1	54.9
Administrative support and management	14,967	64.1	35.9
Public administration and national security, and mandatory public security	220,460	78	22
Education	79,266	47.8	52.2
Health care and social work	17,368	39.9	60.1
Arts, entertainment and leisure	5,722	44.7	55.3
Other services	39,844	57.9	42.1
Family-employed; unclassified production and administration for family use	2,472	45.9	54.1
International organizations and embassies	3,750	65.5	34.5

Economic sector	*Population holding permanent jobs*	*Male (%)*	*Female (%)*
No answer	69,082	47.5	52.5
Total	**3,474,582**	**51.1**	**48.9**

64. The Lao PDR has a legislation that outlines the prohibition of discrimination against women in the private sector. Article 96 of the Law on Labour of 2013 (amended version) outline gender equality in employment in which women have the rights to work and have career in every manufacturing and service businesses that do not conflict with the laws, as well as being able to participate in training, upgrading of labour skills, professions, and to receive salary or wages from working equally to male, with the exception for some jobs which may affect the women's reproductive health which need to be protected in each event.

65. We have encouraged 12 garment factories to participate in the Program for Labour Standards in the Garment Sector in the Lao PDR. A ceremony was held to handover certificates to the 12 factories that participated in the Program for Labour Standards in the Garment Sector in the Lao PDR. The mentioned program focused on improving the working environment, production rate, and competition standard in the garment sector by strengthening the National Labour Inspection System. In order to ensure the consistency with the Law on Labour and the international standards, such program has improved the understanding of the employees and employers on the Law on Labour, and their roles in ensuring good working environment. The factory management and employees were encouraged to design and plan for workplace improvement. The program's activities have strengthened the labour inspection system, increased knowledge on the Law on Labour among the employers and employees, made improvement in consistence with the Law on Labour for the production in the garment factories, provided consultation on the training for labour inspection, provided training to the employers by working with the Trade Union, provided lessons on work safety and labour's health, created learning tools for the training and increased knowledge on the Law on Labour, prepared an assessment report on the factory's impact, provided training on the Law on Labour to the factories and facilitated the Labour Administration Committee by the labour inspection officials. The program commenced in January 2015 and was completed in August 2017.

66. This is a legislation to ensure that there is a mechanism to inspect the labour in details that is used throughout the country. This is a standard to specify measures against violators of the law and regulations on labour. The functions for labour inspection are set in 5 modes. The 5th mode is the special inspection. The purpose is to convert the inspection results into a periodic report to be publicized and disseminated to the public, in particular to report the number of female/male workers, number of factories that comply with the law, number of factories that do not comply with laws or their disciplinary sanctions, and other labour-related measures.

Health

67. **Please provide information on the percentage of the national budget allocated to women's health and on women's access to basic health-care services, including essential obstetric care and sexual and reproductive health services. Please also indicate the measures being taken to improve maternal health services by increasing regional access to adequate institutional and professional capacities and strengthening outreach services, in particular in hard-to-reach**

and remote areas. Please provide information on the specific measures in place to provide birth kits and access to modern contraceptives, in particular for women living in remote and rural areas and in ethnic communities. Please elaborate on the specific functions of the committees for the control of AIDS and indicate whether they are provided with the human, financial and technical support necessary to implement their mandate using a gender perspective. Please provide information on the Law on HIV/AIDS Control and Prevention of 2010 and indicate whether measures have been taken to evaluate its impact, in particular on reducing prevalence in women and girls, including migrant women (para. 117). Please indicate whether there are plans to decriminalize abortion in all cases and specify whether there is a time frame in place for adopting this legislation.

Reply

68. The ratio of the national budget allocated for the health of women, availability of basic health-care service for women, necessary care for antenatal care/giving birth, and reproductive health care are as follows:

- The total budget of the health sector received from the government in 2016 including salary was 410,400,000,000 Kip which consisted of the budget for the Nutrition Centre in the amount of 10,400,000,000 Kip, and the Mother-Child Centre in the amount of 48,400,000,000 Kip;
- The budget which focus on free service for the delivery of newborn and for children under the age of 5 in the country consisted of:
  - 2015–2016 in the amount of 18,380,105,000 Kip;
  - 2017 in the amount of 8,597,584,716 Kip.

69. The government provided support of free service for the delivery of newborn in 7 districts of Vientiane; the Gavi Program provided support to 2 districts (Sangthong District and Pakngum District) in which pregnant women received allowance for transportation and food during their travel for each antenatal care, and they also received allowance when giving birth. Their companion during birth giving also received allowance if such companion had accompanied the pregnant women for antenatal care 4 times. In addition, if the delivery was made at the health providing location, an additional 30,000 Kip was paid.

70. There are measures currently in practice to upgrade the health service for mothers in order to increase sufficient access to health-care and professional services, and to strengthen the service so it could reach out to local areas especially to areas that are difficult to reach or remote areas. The government, represented by the Ministry of Health, has an Action Plan for the implementation of the strategy for reproductive health for mother, newborn, and child 2016–2025) which consist of:

- Children plan, health-care training at community level;
- Health network reaching out to the community;
- Health service at community level;
- Family planning (incorporative service);
- Antenatal care 4 times.

71. The fixed and mobile units: provide health education, family planning, pregnancy check-up, antenatal care, postnatal care, and immunization for pregnant and reproductive women, and vitamin A twice per year.

72. Provided training for midwives for 2008–2015 which resulted in 1,500 midwives being trained. Presently, 70 per cent of the trained midwives are based in the dispensaries and hospitals where one dispensary is required to have 3–5 medics and midwives. It ca n be considered that they are one important factor in the reduction of mother and infant mortality.

73. The Ministry of Health has created mobile units to carry out the monitoring and dissemination of health education related to reproductive health every months especially in remote areas; for this mobilization, if the dispensary in remote area is inaccessible during rainy season, village volunteer shall distribute equipment and contraceptives instead. The staff and volunteer must be trained for such work until they are specialized before being allowed to provide health education and counselling on reproductive health. Also, the government has adopted measures and policies to promote the health of mother and child by adopting the Decree on the Aid for Giving Birth and Treatment of Children under the age of 05, established dispensaries, trained midwives, and assigned these personnel to dispensaries in different areas especially in remote areas; in relation to these issues, the Women's Union of Vientiane Capital has conducted awareness raising on modern family planning through different forms of dissemination activities such as: creating radio program, publicizing in community, and opening for discussion through hotline number 1361. The dissemination in regard to modern birth control provides the citizens with alternatives that are suitable with the body and convenient to use such as condoms for men and women, acupuncture for birth control, birth control vaccination, intrauterine device, contraceptive pills, and sterilization.

74. The functions of the Anti-HIV/AIDS Commission require great attention in protecting and helping HIV/AIDS patients. The budget, officials, and professional personnel are still insufficient after the World Funds Program reduced its assistance.

75. In order to implement the Law on HIV/AIDS Control and Protection 2010, the Ministry of Health has issued policies and plans to monitor the implementation of the law. For instance:

76. To create the National Strategic Plan and Action Plan for the prevention and protection of HIV/AIDS and sexual transmitted diseases as well as provide training on gender perspective in regard to the prevention of AIDS.

77. The World Funds which supported the AIDS Prevention Centre in 2017 in the amount of 1.153.244 USD has carried out prevention and protection activities against such diseases as follows:

- Survey on working women and homosexuals;
- Provide the Rapid test Determine and Unigol;
- Provide treatment for complications caused by diseases and antibiotics at 11 places of treatment in the country (OI and ARV);
- Monitor the implementation;
- Organize workshop to conclude annual activities;
- Provide administrative budget (water and electricity) in 17 provinces.

78. In regard to the function to minimize the transmission of HIV/AIDS in women and children, including mobile female workers (paragraph 117), the Lao PDR has signed the Memorandum of Understanding with Thailand on the implementation of the transfer system. For example, in the event a Lao worker in Thailand has been infected with AIDS, Thailand shall transfer the mentioned worker to the Lao PDR for monitoring and medication; in addition, in collaboration with the World Funds, the following activities were implemented:

- Conduct all forms of awareness raising especially on the control of sexual transmitted diseases to the target in the country;
- Strengthen the places which provides services of counselling and voluntary blood tests;
- Expand the service centres in every province where ARV distributed;
- Conduct awareness raising to villages with infected patients so that there is no discrimination and dislike towards the infected patients;
- 90 per cent of the infected patients in compliance with the national target must be assisted and taken care of by the community;
- Every pregnant woman in the risk group must have blood test for AIDS;
- Pregnant women with AIDS shall receive antibiotics to minimize mother-to-child transmission;
- Every infected child shall be checked, monitored, and medicated for free;
- Infected pregnant women giving birth in hospital shall be monitored by the doctors and medicated for free.

79. The Lao PDR prohibit illegal abortion as stated in the amended Law on Treatment, No. 032/PRE, dated on 30 January 2015, Article 50 regarding the treatment that is not in compliance with medical practice. It is mentioned that the treatment providers are prohibited from providing treatment, encouraging, and promoting treatment that is not in compliance with medical practice such as: unauthorized abortion, and the practice of treatment techniques that could endanger one's health. But there is a condition for the mother and family in severe case that require abortion in order to preserve the life of the mother. Furthermore, it is stipulated in the Penal Law that an abortion is a criminal act. In this regard, Article 92 states that an individual who performs an abortion for another person illegally shall be imprisoned between 5 to 10 years. In the event a woman illegally performs a self-induced abortion or with the help of others shall be imprisoned between 3 months to 1 year, and fined depending on the case as stipulated in the law.

Women with disabilities

80. **Please provide an update on the measures taken to adopt Decree No. 137 on Persons with Disabilities (2014) (para. 131). Please provide information on the extent to which women with disabilities are disproportionately affected by poverty and a lack of access to health services, education and employment. Please provide specific examples of existing social protection schemes aimed at reducing the economic burden on women in disadvantaged groups, including women with disabilities. Please indicate the measures in place to ensure that women and girls with disabilities who are victims of violence have adequate access to justice, including legal aid, victim and witness protection programmes and medical and psychosocial assistance. Please also indicate whether the perpetrators of such violence are adequately punished.**

Reply

81. Another measure to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to employment is stipulated in the Decree No. 137 on People with Disabilities; the National Commission for People with Disabilities and the Elderly is currently preparing national policies, strategy and action plan for people with disabilities. The Secretariat to the National Commission for the People with Disabilities and the Elderly has worked with the relevant sectors to organize a consultation meeting on

the national policies, strategy and action plan for people with disabilities, attended by 408 participants of whom were 164 women; a consultation was held among relevant sectors on the coordination of the work for people with disabilities, attended by 45 participants of whom were 17 women. From this number, there were 12 people with disabilities of whom were 4 women.

82. In reference to the 2015 Population Census, the number of people with disabilities covers 2.8 per cent of the Lao population. Disability is not considered as a limitation to have access to the basic rights as stipulated in the Constitution and the government has improved the education sector in order to create opportunity to enable the Lao citizens to access education. For instance, the Law on Education 2015, Article 6 outlines that the citizens have equal rights to receive education without discrimination based on nationality, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, physical condition, and socioeconomic status. Everyone has the right to receive quality education and life-long learning equally as mentioned in laws and regulations. Furthermore, to ensure that access to health service is available to people with disabilities, especially women, the government has improved some of its regulations, laws and policies. This is to ensure that everyone has equal rights in receiving health service without any discrimination. For instance, the Law on Treatment, Article 6 states that the citizens have equal rights to have treatment when necessary without any discrimination. Also, in regard to employment opportunity for Lao workers, the Law on Labour, Article 33, Clause 1 has identified the elements for building employment opportunity which are the promotion of independent occupation, work in the village or at one's home, employment of underprivileged people, female, disabled worker, and elderly worker. This focuses on giving many alternatives to the workers so that they can have work, income, and to eradicate poverty. For example, in 2016, 8 women with disabilities were organized into a group to produce budgeted stoves which are eco-friendly and also provided employment for 30 other women with disabilities.

83. The Constitution of the Lao PDR, Article 35 states that the Lao citizens, without discrimination based on gender, social status, education level, belief, and ethnicity, are equal before the law. In order to ensure the rights of the citizens against any discrimination and so that discriminator is punished, the government has improved and enacted laws as punishment measures against offenders. This is to ensure that women and girls, with or without disability, who fall prey to violence, have access to justice as outlined in Article 32 of the Law on the Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children. It is stipulated that when there is an occurrence or report on violence, the relevant sector shall provide protection and assistance to the victims and children in terms of social welfare, counselling, temporary and safe accommodation, childcare, medical service, law, economy, education, profession training, and return them to their family and society. In addition, to ensure that people with disabilities receive legal protection and assistance, the government issued the Decree on Legal Assistance, No. 77/GOL, dated on 28/2/2018, and in Article 2 regarding legal assistance states that the legal service shall be free of charge for poor, underprivileged, disabled people, children with the need for special protection, and wrongdoer shall receive assistance from lawyer as specified by the law. Women and children who are victims of violence and victims of human trafficking shall receive assistance from a legal support organization.

Rural women

84. **Please provide an update on phase II of the Lao Poverty Reduction Fund, covering the period 2012–2015 (para. 128), and specify whether its impact on rural women living in extreme poverty has been evaluated. In line with the Committee's general recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural**

women, please describe to what extent rural women and women from ethnic groups have been involved in the development of the Fund and others outlined in the report in order to address extreme poverty. Please specify whether the proposed amendments to the Land Law of 2003, envisaged for 2018, will provide for greater ownership of key assets by rural women active in the agriculture sector. Please indicate whether the provision of more accessible credit systems for women in the sector is envisaged to minimize restrictions on taking out loans, such as the requirement that land titles be used as collateral. Please also indicate the measures in place to ensure that women from ethnic groups living in rural and remote areas have control over their resources and are able to continue to practise the positive aspects of their culture and traditions without hindrance.

Reply

85. To assess the Poverty Reduction Fund II, it was seen that not less than 80 per cent of women were beneficiaries. Herein women from rural areas and those from poor ethnic groups benefited from project implementation as follows:

- The Poverty Reduction Fund target villages with most poor family;
- When selecting activity or program, 2 groups of females and males were formed, and women were given the rights to select 3 programs while men could choose only 2 programs;
- The activity with high labour remuneration is prioritized for poor women so that they have income, such as: repairing canal, and roads in the village;
- The self-help group for saving has selected women as representatives of the families.

86. The Constitution of the Lao PDR has ensured equal rights freedoms for the Lao people of all ethnic groups without discrimination based on gender in the exercise of the right to mastery of the country and hold land rights as stipulated in Article 17 (New) of the Constitution. The Constitution states that the State protects the rights in regard to the rights (possession rights, land use rights, usufruct, and disposition rights) and the inheritance rights to the property of the organization and individual. The land belongs to the nation, the State ensures the usage rights, transfer rights, and inheritance rights in compliance with the law. Furthermore, there is the Decree on the Implementation of the Law on Land, No. 88/PM, dated on 3 June 2008. Article 26 of the decree states that the traditional land use is the preservation and uses of land through land development or in accordance with land allocation by the State which is done regularly, continuously, and for long time till present. There is no document that certifies the land use rights of the concerning person, organization or village since the State acknowledges the land use rights based on the tradition of the individual, organization or village. In this regard, the State issues land titles or land maps or land certificates depending on the case as stipulated in the Law on Land. This is done by submitting application for land registration to the Land Management Authority. In relation to such issue, the government is making improvement to some articles of the Law on Land. In reference to the draft of this law, it is open for Lao citizens to use their rights to an agricultural land for long term which is mentioned in detail in Article 44 (amendment) regarding demarcation of agricultural land. It is mentioned that the State permits Lao citizens to long term land use rights for agricultural land in accordance with the Land Allocation Master Plan and Land Use Plan. This is in consistence with the special characteristics in terms of geographical location, socioeconomic development, and population density during each period in each areas based on the specification of Provincial Administration and approved by the People's Provincial Assembly.

87. The Lao Women's Union has an important role in contributing to eradicate poverty for women and ethnic groups. The function of the women's savings group at village level is one of the priorities of the Lao Women's Union as it enables women to have access to financing. They can borrow and use the borrowed money for the economy of their family, plantation and livestock, promote education, and improve the living condition. Such function has been growing step by step. In 2017, there were a total of 2.041 saving groups, an increase of 2 per cent when compared to 2016; 299,221 members, an increase of 21 per cent when compared to 2016; and savings of 465,304,361,118 Kip, an increase of 28 per cent when compared to 2016. Furthermore, the Micro-Finance Institute which accepts deposit for the development of women and families was awarded with the 10th ASEAN Award for Development and Poverty Eradication. Currently, there are 9 service units with a total of 9,554 members, 7,195 females, with a total saving of 9,423,991,000 Kip, and a total loan of 22,902,253,000 Kip.

88. The Law on Property, Article 26, stipulates that the marital property of husband and wife is the property generated by the couple during their marriage. The husband and wife have equal rights to the marital property regardless of where it come from whether it is from the husband or wife. Furthermore, the Law on Inheritance (amendment), Article 2, states that inheritance is the passing on of property that belongs to the deceased which includes the deceased's rights and obligations to the inheritor in compliance with the law or will.

89. **Please specify whether measures, including temporary special measures, have been adopted to address the disparities that rural women and women from ethnic groups face with regard to access to land and property, as well as basic social services, including education and health, and participation in decision-making processes, as previously recommended by the Committee (CEDAW/C/LAO/CO/7, para. 45).**

90. Every Lao citizens have equal rights to have access to the state administration especially on education, health, and social welfare which is stipulated in the Constitution to facilitate to land and property that belong to women in rural areas, the government has drafted the Law on Relocation and Occupation as well as drafted the Decree on Land Management which are expected to be completed and implemented in 2019. In regard to the access and usage of financial sources for the farmers (for small cash production), both women and men have organized a production group that is certified by district administration. The group can carry out its activities in compliance with the regulations of each local areas or decision on the use of financial source; in addition, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry also promoted the technique for plantation and animal breeding especially for poor families so that they can have access to production and financial sources. This is shown in the table below:

		Divided by gender (2015 to 30 April 2018)				
No.	*Description*	*Female*	*(%)*	*Male*	*(%)*	*Total*
1	Plantation and livestock Technical Officers	1,291	29	3,162	71	4,453
2	Number of farmers who have access to plantation and livestock techniques	679,640	48	736,277	52	1,415,917
3	Number of farmers making a living by plantation and livestock	1,597,981	37.6	2,649,769	62	4,247,750
4	Poor families have access to land for farming	1,486,713	35	2,761,038	65	4,247,750
5	Poor families have access to financial sources	495,571	35	920,346	65	1,415,917

91. In addition, in order to ensure quality health service that could reach everyone, there was an improvement to some of the government's laws and policies, such as: the Strategy and Planning Framework on the Integrated Package of Mother's and Child's Health (2009–2015) which outlines the strategy and planning to introduce to the relevant parties in regard to the design, implementation, and assessment of the plan related to postnatal care, child health care, immunization, and nutrition. Due to limited budget, the government, as a result, initiated the plan to establish the Health Equality Fund with the aim to help the poorest family that could not pay for health security.

92. In regard to the access to education of women in rural areas, the Ministry of Education and Sports has adopted measures to enable women or girls to have access to education at every level and fields. This is indicated in the focused works in Plan I of the Action Plan III for equality, mother and child in the education sector (2016–2020). In addition to the improvement to the learning and teaching curriculum which focuses on gender perspective, it also outlines the learning and teaching curriculum to eliminate illiteracy and provide vocational training to women in poor areas in order for them to generate income and improve their families' living condition, builds dormitory, provides stipend for poor female, male and underprivileged students at primary education level, secondary education, profession, and university so that they could study normally.

93. The government of the Lao PDR has policies and plans which ensure that women from ethnic groups can get involved in politics such as in decision making. The measures used to increase female representatives in politics and decision making are indicated in the election of the 8th legislature of the National Assembly in 2016. There was the resolution of the Central Party's Political Bureau, No. 29/PBCP, dated on 21 December 2015, on the Increase of the Party's Direction on the Election of Members of the 8th Legislature of the National Assembly, and Members of the People's Provincial Assembly and of the Vientiane Capital for 2015–2020 to focus on women involvement in politics. This focus on the direction and ensure the ratio of female members to at least cover 30 per cent of the total members of the National Assembly, such as the People's Assembly of the Provinces and Vientiane; even though that election resulted in only 41 women being selected to the National Assembly which covers 27.5 per cent of the total 149 members, but when compared to the National Assembly VII, there was an increase of 2.5 per cent. It can be considered that the Lao PDR is ranked 2nd among ASEAN countries and 58th among 193 parliaments in the world.

Migrant women

94. **Please provide information on measures taken or envisaged to combat all forms of discrimination against migrant women and ensure their adequate access to training and employment, social security and social services, housing, health care and education. Please also provide information on measures taken or envisaged to ensure that migrant women receive adequate protection and assistance in cases of domestic violence. Please provide updated data on the employment rate and working conditions of migrant women in the State party. Please indicate the measures taken to prevent and combat violence against migrant women. Please specify whether the views of women, in particular women from ethnic groups, are adequately represented on the steering committee on domestic workers and the legalization of the status of Lao workers in Thailand (para. 104).**

Reply

95. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has worked on a program to reduce risks of illegal

migrant workers from all forms of forced labour. It was implemented in 2016 and has the results as follows: completed the training regarding safely working abroad for officials from various sectors in Khammouane Province, for instance, for the officials from the districts offices of Labour and Social Welfare Offices, Public Security, Education, teachers from the districts' secondary schools, and villages from Mahaxay District, Thakhek District, Nongbok District, Hinboune District, Nhommalath District, Xebangfai District, and Xaybuathong District. There was a total of 07 training batches which consist of 217 participants in total with 68 females; after the participants received the training, they continued to carry out the publicity and dissemination of information to schools and villages of the target districts so that they will be aware of safe labour migration. In 2017, training was completed regarding the awareness raising of safe labour migration, the rights and interests of the victims of human trafficking in Vientiane Province, and Oudomxay Province. There were 132 participants with 48 female.

96. In order to ensure that there are protection and assistance for women migrant workers in the event of violence against women during labour migration, The Lao PDR has adopted some legislations to protect them; in addition, there are various organizations that are responsible for the management of women migrant workers. For instance:

- Established 26 employment agencies that can actively run the business of providing employment both domestically and internationally, therein only 2 companies are registered as domestic employment providers. Every company has been rightfully permitted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, and every company is required to provide trainings to workers as preparation for their departure to work abroad. At the same time, these employment agencies have the responsibility to follow up closely the workers that was sent abroad;
- The Labour Attaché or diplomats at Lao Embassies in charge of labour affairs is an important person to assist migrant workers when experiencing problems. He/she has the duty to monitor the workers' condition in the recruiting companies in order to inspect the companies' contract performance towards Lao workers; assist the families of the deceased workers especially the mediation for the allowance of the deceased workers, and the transportation of the corpses and remains back home; provide consultation to the party that wishes to send foreign workers to legally work in the Lao PDR; provide consultation on the Law on Labour of the Lao PDR and relevant documents; receive request letter for assistance from the workers and their relatives and provide assistance in the mediation.

97. Also, to promote safe labour migration for women, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare has established various centres to provide information to those who intend to work abroad:

- Established 3 information centres for migrant workers (such centres are in Champasack and Sayaboury Provinces which are under the Provincial Labour and Social Welfare Division. The centre in Savannakhet Province is under the Provincial Trade Union);
- Published manuals for the operation of the information centres for migrant workers, and has provided trainings for officials that are in charge of the centres;
- Published manuals for pre-departure to work in overseas and provided training to the recruitment enterprises, recruitment centres, and the job development and recruitment sector at provincial level in the country;

- Organized events to celebrate the International Migration Day such as a labour fair, printed pamphlets, posters, information cards, in order to raise awareness about safe labour migration;
- Setup a network that promotes safe labour migration which includes the International Labour Organization, United Nations, and INGOs, and meetings were held to discuss, exchange issues and experiences in respect to migrant workers.

Employment Rate

***Annual statistics on laborers working in Thailand and training in Japan**

	2011-2012		*2012-2013*		*2013-2014*		*2014-2015*		*2015-2016*		*2016-2017*	
Sectors	*Total*	*Female*	*Total*	*Female*	*Total*	*Female*	*Total*	*Female*	*Total*	*Female*	*Total*	*Female*
Agriculture and Forestry	682	354	1,919	754	529	210	5,763	2,144	620	253	3,174	1,218
Industrial	4,114	2,102	9,748	4,176	4,271	1,908	17,067	8,037	2,277	1,040	6,311	2,355
Service	2,618	945	8,828	4,188	3,504	1,949	27,882	16,996	5,144	2,643	11,183	6,966
Total	**7,414**	**3,401**	**20,495**	**9,118**	**8,304**	**4,067**	**50,712**	**27,176**	**8,041**	**3,936**	**20,668**	**10,539**

***Statistics on illegal labour migration and without documentation**

	2010-2011		*2012-2013*		*2014-2015*		*2015-2016*		*2017*	
Sector	*Total*	*Female*	*Total*	*Female*	*Total*	*Female*	*Total*	*Female*	*Total*	*Female*
Total:	**25,066**	**12,448**	**9,756**	**4,716**	**42,192**	**22,955**	**71,644**	**39,355**	**8,704**	**4,391**
Agriculture	9,608	4,487	448	196	5,006	1,845	7,214	3,020	1,639	695
Industrial	8,752	4,034	4,422	2,013	13,917	6,675	20,853	9,322	2,666	971
Service	6,706	3,927	4,886	2,507	23,269	14,435	43,551	27,013	4,339	2,725

***Annual statistics on imported foreign labour**

	2014-2015		*2015-2016*		*2016-2017*	
Sector	*Total*	*Female*	*Total*	*Female*	*Total*	*Female*
Agriculture	17,263	2,711	15,543	2,290	901	170
Industrial	2,353	650	3,343	1,096	346	122
Service	2,667	501	2967	569	461	106
Total	**22,283**	**3,862**	**21,853**	**3,955**	**1,708**	**398**

98. The Lao PDR attaches importance to supporting the advancement of women and gender equality without discrimination based on ethnicity which is one of the main goals and is the foundation for the socioeconomic development in the Lao PDR; the Minister of labour and Social Welfare has issued the Ordinance to establish the Steering Committee to oversee the whole matter. The Committee consists of 15 members with 1 female; the Operational Task Force is in charge of overseeing the status of Lao workers in Thailand. with 18 members of whom are 2 females. The appointed women are both from ethnic groups.

Marriage and family relations

99. **Please indicate the specific steps taken to implement measures to eliminate polygamy, in line with article 4 of the Family Law of 2008. Please also indicate the measures taken to implement amendments to the Family Law, which prohibits the lowering of the age of marriage to 15 years, and to reduce the persistently high rate of child marriage, in particular in the light of the alleged ease with which birth registration and identity documents can be falsified. Please specify the safeguards in place to protect girls under the age of 18 years who have been allowed to marry and indicate the measures taken to change cultural attitudes regarding child marriage through awareness-raising campaigns, in particular in rural and ethnic communities. Please provide information on whether and how considerations of gender-based violence against women in the domestic sphere are taken into account when ruling on child custody and visitation rights. Please also provide an update on the regulations pertaining to child maintenance, including whether a minimum level of maintenance has been established.**

Reply

100. The Lao citizens, both female and male with the age of 18 or above, have the right to voluntary choose their partners for marriage based on their love for each other. Marriage must be practiced under the principle of monogamy as stipulated in Article 4 of the Law on Family, which states that a mature female or male shall practice the principle of monogamy only; the State does not allow more than one husband or wife. The couple that intends to get married shall submit an application in writing to the family registration authority or local administration via the village of residence of either the female or male. The family registration authority shall make consideration of the marriage application carefully. For instance, the complete document sets such as the certificate of residence, certificate of singleness, and health certificate. When the documents have met all the marriage requirement, the family registration authority shall call upon the couple for marriage registration.

101. Measures to reduce early marriage issues: For marriage registration, it is stated that the Birth Certificate must be submitted to ensure compliance with the Law on Family; also, Article 52 and 53 of the Law on Family states that anyone who have good deeds in implementing the law shall receive award or other policies based on regulations. Any individual that violate the marriage requirement as stipulated in the Law on Family shall be educated, disciplined, penalized, and receive civil or criminal measures, depending on the case.

102. The Law on Family outlines the age limit for marriage as it prohibits marriage before the age of 18, and marriage must result from the love of the couple. The state does not allow any individual, family or organization to force or obstruct the marriage of its progeny, other family members, staff, and civil servant that are under its responsibility. Further, Article 53 of the Law on Family states that any individual that violates the marriage requirement as stipulated in the Law on Family shall be educated, disciplined, fined, and receive civil or criminal measures depending on the severity of the case. In the case of rural areas where it is hard to avoid early marriage, the government has focused on raising awareness so that they have their behaviour changed in terms of early marriage.

103. The National Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mother-Child has drafted the National Action Plan for Mother and Child 2016–2020 with the aim to encourage volunteers at village level in the target three-development villages and districts in the country to disseminate, monitor, and encourage work related to children. One of the function is to focus on reproductive health and early marriage.

The dissemination work was performed in many forms to create awareness and behavioural change in respect to violence against women and children. The dissemination focused on reproductive health by stressing on the danger of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy which will cause issues to child development. This enables the citizens to understand that the appropriate age for marriage and pregnancy is from 18 to 35 years old. Furthermore, the dissemination of relevant laws such as the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Children, Law on the Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Children, Law on Family, Penal Law, which provides for the rights and interests of children as well as punitive measures for offenders.

104. Even though the Lao PDR has carried out the dissemination for family harmony without violence of any form, but the issue of violence and family dispute still occurred. Divorce negatively affects the rights and interests of children. The Law on Family (amendment of 2008), Article 21/3 states that the consideration for divorce shall be made based on the couple's reasons and results for not being able to live together. If the couple have given thorough thoughts to the problem but still could not come to terms, the court shall decide that the couple can divorce. The court shall impose measures to protect the interests of the child that is under the age of maturity, and the interests of the husband or wife who is unable to work and make a living. In relation to such issue, Article 23 of the same law mentions about child custody. In the event the couple could not come to term in regard to child custody after divorce, the court shall make a decision on child custody either to the father or mother by referring to the interests of the child and in compliance with the law. The divorced couple must take care and look after the child until the maturity age of 18 in accordance with the agreement between the couple or court's decision in the event the couple could not reach an agreement.

105. The legislation which outlines child custody is the Law on Family wherein Article 35 (amendment) states that the parents are obliged to take care of their child that are under the age of maturity, and the child that reaches the maturity age of 18 but is unable to work due to disability or insanity. The obligation of taking care of one's child shall be performed even though the parents are still living together or divorced. The cost for child custody may be requested at any time when the child has still not reach the age of 18 and there shall be no expiration of the statutory limitation. The cost of child custody for 01 child is based on the living cost of each period by taking half of the minimum salary of civil servant as calculation basis. The parents have the rights to request to the court to reduce the custody cost in the event one falls in difficult economic situation. In addition, in order to perform the obligations in the Convention related to the rights and interests of women and children to which the Lao PDR is a party, or to promote children's development and ability at suitable age, the Ministry of Health has an Action Plan regarding health care for mother and child which outlines the free cost of giving birth in the hospital and dispensary, and children age of 05 or below shall receive health care, child nutrition, vitamin, and vaccination free of charge.

Disaster risk reduction and climate change

106. **Given that the State party is susceptible to flooding and drought (para. 125), please provide information on whether a gender perspective has been incorporated into national disaster management, relief and recovery strategies and specify whether adequate resources are available for its implementation, indicating whether women participate at all stages of the process.**

Reply

107. The Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare is responsible for the implementation of work and assistance to those affected by natural disasters. In 2015–2016, assistance was provided to the citizens that were affected by natural disasters, the underprivileged, especially women and children in the amount of 7,027,557,000 Kip. The benefits were given to 3,104 families which consist of 19,153 people with 9,590 female. In 2017, donations were received from the society to assist those affected by natural disasters in the amount of 207,827,000 Kip. The benefits were given to 46,881 families which consist of 190,895 people with 164,919 females. In addition, consumable goods and utilities were distributed such as rice, clothing, shoes, zinc roofing, nails, tents, and household utilities, and necessary items for daily use were given to those affected by cold weather, flood and other disasters.

108. Furthermore, the government attaches importance to women's contribution in regard to natural disaster by issuing the Decree on the Implementation and Activities of the National Committee for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control. In addition to the duties and scope of each party, the Decree also outlines the component and personnel that consist of 2 females in the 24 members of the National Committee for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control. This is for the involvement of all parties concerned in regard to the performance and discussion on the prevention and control of natural disasters.

Optional Protocol and amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention

109. **Please indicate whether progress has been made with respect to the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and acceptance of the amendment to article 20 (1) of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee.**

Reply

110. Currently the Lao PDR has ratified into 7 out of 9 core conventions on human rights, and into 2 Optional Protocols. Over the past years, the Lao PDR has concentrated efforts to implement its obligations under the convention to which the Lao PDR is a party. Therefore, with regards to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women, the Lao PDR does not see the necessity yet to access to this Optional Protocol because the country intends to improve and strengthen its internal complaints mechanism for the Lao citizens so that women are able to fully exercise their rights in submitting proposal to the administrative authority, complaints to the judiciary, and petition for justice to the National Assembly in accordance with the Law on Handling of Complaints. Even though the Lao PDR will not soon access to this Optional Protocol, it will study and conduct research on the contents of the Optional Protocol and exchange experience with countries that are already party to it. In regard to the amendment to Article 20 of the CEDAW, the Lao PDR is ready to accept the amendment and currently it is in the process of fulfilling its internal legal requirements for acceptance of the amendment in accordance with the newly enacted Law on Treaties and International Agreements of 2017.